

# Pressure mounts on FDA and industry to ensure safety of food ingredients

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Confusion over a 1997 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rule that eases the way for food manufacturers to use ingredients "generally regarded as safe," or GRAS, has inspired a new initiative by food makers. Food safety advocates say the current GRAS process allows substances into the food supply that might pose a health risk, while industry defends its record. An article in *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN) details what changes are on the table.

Melody M. Bomgardner, a senior editor at C&EN, explains that the rule, which was never finalized, was initially established to allow [food makers](#) to use some ingredients, such as vinegar, that are accepted as safe. But food safety advocates contend that it doesn't do enough to protect consumers because it permits industry to select its own experts to make the assessments. Industry experts say that there is no evidence to support this assertion, and they contend that the current review practice for safety, toxicity and other effects of new ingredients is reliable. However, information on many additives is not publicly available, which makes verifying industry accounts difficult.

At least one trade group, however, is proposing steps toward more transparency and an improved process for assessing ingredients. The Grocery Manufacturers Association plans to sponsor a database that will house information on all GRAS assessments. It would be available to the FDA and other stakeholders. Food safety advocates say it's the FDA that should undertake such an initiative, but at least it's a step in the right direction.

**More information:** "Generally Lacking in Agreement" - [cen.acs.org/articles/92/i38/Fo ... Additive-Safety.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/92/i38/Fo...Additive-Safety.html)

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